

Current social psychological perspectives on justice

MORTON DEUTSCH

*Teachers College, Columbia University,
Columbia, U.S.A.*

Abstract

In the context of a comparative review of four recently published books on justice, the author provides an assessment of the current state of the field. He specifically discusses the role of equity theory, the variety of distributive principles, the role of justice in social behaviour, the broadening of perspectives in the field, and some remaining gaps and weaknesses in the literature. In concluding, the work of the leading theorists in the area is evaluated.

A PERSONAL DIGRESSION

Early in 1972, Melvin Lerner invited me to participate in a conference on injustice in North America. Prior to this, as a social psychologist, I had been mainly concerned with injustice in my research and theorizing relating to prejudice and discrimination (Deutsch and Collins, 1951). Of course, I knew about Homans' theorizing about distributive justice (1961), the work of Adams (1963, 1965) in developing equity theory, and Lerner's (1966, 1970, 1971) research bearing upon the 'just world hypothesis'. I had a favourable impression of the work being done; much of it seemed like an interesting, new application of dissonance theory. However, my acquaintance with this area was largely superficial. Lerner's invitation pushed me to become more knowledgeable.

In preparation of my paper for Lerner's conference, I read widely—delving into the literature of the moral and legal philosophers, sociological and political science writing, and rereading the relevant work of social psychologists. The more I read the more dissatisfied I became with the then-existing literature in social psychology: it seemed too narrowly focused, too parochial, and too unwittingly reflective of the dominant, Western ideology. The focus was limited mainly to how subjects in laboratory experiments attempted to restore their psychological equilibrium after experiencing or observing an inequity. There was little research of theorizing on such topics as the conditions necessary for awakening the sense of injustice, procedural justice, retributive justice, the socio-psychological determinants and effects of different systems of distributive justice, and so on. The parochial emphasis of equity theorists on 'proportionality' as the sole canon of distributive

0046-2772/83/030305-15\$01.50

© 1983 by John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

justice suggests that these theorists were neglecting other distributive principles, e.g. 'equal shares to all', 'to each according to his need', which have been the rallying slogans for different political ideologies. Beyond this, the economic and market orientation of equity theory appeared to reflect, unwittingly, the implicit assumption in much of current Western ideology that economic 'rationality' and economic values should pervade all social life and are appropriate in noneconomic social relations (e.g. between lovers, between parent and child).

My paper (Deutsch, 1974) for the Lerner conference, 'Awakening the sense of injustice'¹ focused on the conditions affecting the sensitivity to injustice in both the victim and the victimizer. It was not specifically a critique of the then-existing literature but it sketched out a different perspective. I emphasized the importance of procedural justice and described a number of its components. I considered also the question whether any one of nine commonly listed values of distributive justice (e.g. 'contributions', 'effort', 'need', 'equality') is the sovereign value of justice. My conclusion was (p. 23) 'The natural values of justice are those values which foster effective social cooperation to promote individual well-being. It is evident that particular socio-historical circumstances will play a role in determining the individual and social effectiveness of the many alternative possible values which could be employed for the distributions of benefits and harms'. I also stressed the importance of understanding the determinants of the scope of applicability of one's concepts of justice: after all, Eichmann, the mass murderer of the Jews in the Nazi era, was reported to be a good family man. A later paper (Deutsch, 1975), again at Lerner's invitation (Lerner, 1975), systematized some of these ideas and offered a framework for developing hypotheses.

I don't know whether Lerner was trying to draw me into the 'justice' area by his successive invitations and my consequent commitments but that was the result. As I became more involved and started to think about my research—past and present, as well as future—in the context of 'justice' I found myself in the position of the bourgeois gentleman of Moliere's play who was delighted to learn that he had been speaking prose all the time. I was delighted to recognize that much research that had been done under other labels could be labelled as 'justice' research quite properly. Thus, the study of the effects of cooperation and competition upon group processes (e.g. Deutsch, 1949) could be considered a study of the social psychological consequences of two contrasting distributive values ('rewarding group members equally' or 'rewarding them in terms of their relative rank in their contributions to group performance'). Similarly, many studies of conflict and bargaining (e.g. Deutsch, 1973) are centrally related to the social psychology of justice. They all were focused on the important question: Under what conditions are people with conflicting interests able to work out an agreement (i.e. a system of justice defining what each shall give and receive in the transaction between them) that is stable and mutually satisfying?

Yet, by the beginning of the 1970's, 'justice' was still a new area of social psychological inquiry. The term itself received hardly any mention in the indices of

¹I note that this paper, which was awarded the Gordon Allport prize, was buried in a book (Lerner and Ross, 1974) based upon the conference which was not publicized nor distributed by the publisher. I am very fond of the paper and would be happy to send a copy to anyone who writes to for one.

the successive editions of the *Handbook of Social Psychology* (1935, 1954, 1969). By the middle of the 1970's, however, enough research and theorizing had taken place to stimulate several integrative volumes on the social psychology of justice (Lerner, 1975; Berkowitz and Walster, 1976; Walster, Berscheid, and Walster, 1978). Reflecting the then dominant emphasis on equity, a chapter which I wrote as a first installment on an ambitious book (Deutsch, 1977) had as its first section, the work of the equity theorists—notably, Homans, Adams, Walster; fifty-eight of its seventy-two manuscript papers were devoted to a presentation and critique of equity theory.² The works of Lerner, Leventhal, and Sampson were summarized and evaluated in the remaining pages.

In a 1977 research proposal to NSF, I made several critical points about the literature I had reviewed in this chapter: '(1) It has been heavily dominated by the assumption that 'equity' is the sovereign principle of distributive justice; only recently has this assumption been strongly challenged. (2) Some of the key assumptions underlying equity theory have not been systematically examined, particularly the notion that economic productivity is fostered by application of the equity principle. (3) The literature has placed its primary research focus on reactions to "inequity", on studying the process by which psychological equilibrium is restored once an inequity is experienced. This is a very important but quite limiting focus for investigating the range of social psychological phenomena related to distributive justice. (4) There has been a lack of systematic investigations of the different attributes of distributive systems. (5) Neither the consequences nor the determinants of different types of distributive systems have been systematically studied. (6) As a result of the over-emphasis of research on equity, with its implicit context of the market-economy, there has been insufficient research on distributive justice in other institutional contexts such as the family, the school, or the hospital. Other principles than equity may more strongly come into play in these other contexts. (7) Adams and Freedman (1976) have noted that there has been little investigation of the nature of the distress experienced as a result of an inequity. More generally, the phenomenology and experience of injustice in different settings has been studied hardly at all'. Since 1977, my students and I have been engaged in an extensive programme of research which attempts to address itself to the points listed above, especially point 5.

I have gone into this extended personal history of my involvement in the 'justice' area because it is well for the reader to know that I am not a disinterested observer. I am an active, involved participant with a distinctive orientation. As an active participant I am inclined to be sympathetic toward the whole area, wanting it to flourish an eager to encourage more social psychologists to be engaged with it. As someone with a distinctive orientation, I am more aware of the limitations and problems in the work of people with different orientations from mine than I would be if I did not have my own formulated ideas as a reference point.

THE CURRENT STATE OF THE AREA

Recently, a number of books have been published which indicate that my 1977 review chapter is largely out-of-date. Three are edited collections of specially

²For published summaries of this material see Deutsch (1978, 1981b.)

prepared articles (Mikula, 1980; Lerner and Lerner, 1981; Greenberg and Cohen, 1982), and one is a report of an extended programme of research (Lerner, 1980). My review and assessment of the current state of the field is based upon these four books as is my further discussion of the work of some of the leading researchers in this area.³

The four books are each valuable but for somewhat different purposes. The book entitled by Mikula (M) provides the best sampling of different viewpoints and an excellent overview of the field. The Lerner and Lerner book (L and L) has an important 'unifying' (but loosely adhered to) theme of justice in times of scarcity and change; it has more than the usual number of quite interesting, original papers. The various papers in Greenberg and Cohen's book (G and C) show the interrelations between work in the social psychology of justice and work in other core areas of social psychology; it also provides a fine overview of the justice area. Lerner's book (L) is an engaging, personalized description of the research that he and his students have done on his 'just world hypothesis'. It provides an excellent portrayal of how a warm-hearted social psychologist, who doesn't believe the world is just, keeps probing in a tough-minded way to see whether or not his hypothesis that people need to believe in a just world is a valid one.

From these four books, a number of conclusions can be drawn:

I. 'Equity theory' is still an important but no longer a dominant theoretical influence on the area. There have been many substantive criticisms of this theory from different sources. The equity theorists, Austin and Hatfield (formerly Walster) in (M), respond that the criticisms do not require the discarding of 'equity theory' only its elaboration. Their major suggestions for elaboration involve developing a theory of negotiations which specifies how differences in power determine the values of the perceived inputs and outcomes in the equity formula; and developing a theory of how the social context determines what canons of justice will be perceived as fair in an interpersonal exchange. The tone of 'equity theory' in the 1980's is much more subdued than it was in the 1970's. The change in tone appears to reflect a response to:

- (1) The rejection of 'proportionality' as a sovereign principle in favour of a situationally-appropriate, multi-principle approach by such people as Deutsch (1974), Lerner (1975), Leventhal (1976a,b), Mikula and Schwinger (1978), Sampson (1975), and even Homans (1982).
- (2) The criticism of the ideology implicit in equity which reflects particular socio-historical conditions (Sampson, 1975).
- (3) The criticism of 'equity theory' that it ignores the interactional aspects of the exchange relationship. It focuses on what goes on in the isolated head of one or the other of the participants and ignores the bargaining process involved in the participants arriving at a mutually acceptable definition of equity (Deutsch, 1977).
- (4) The criticism that the 'economic' model underlying equity theory, while appropriate to economic relations is inappropriate to intimate relations. Holmes, in (L and L), presents a very insightful analysis of the problems that result when a close relationship is considered to be similar to an

³Two other books (Folger, in press; Messick and Cook, in press) which I had hoped to review were not available from the publishers when this paper was being prepared.

economic, exchange relationship. Austin and Tobiasen, in (G and C), combine 'equity theory' and a variety of other theoretical approaches in an eclectic approach to understanding moral evaluation in intimate relationships.

- (5) The criticism that 'equity theory' does not take adequately into account the attributions that people make in regard to the inequities that people experience: the nature of the attributions will not only affect the degree of distress experienced but also how and whether they will attempt to respond to the inequity. Utne and Kidd, in (M), and Cohen, in (G and C), discuss causal attribution in relation to justice very insightfully, adding a new perspective to work in this area.

II. There has been general acceptance of the view that there are a variety of distributive principles and systematic knowledge is beginning to accumulate about the socio-psychological effects of several common principles. Knowledge is also starting to be acquired about the factors leading to preferences and choices of one or another principle. In addition, a number of theorists have developed theories in this area.

- (1) There appears to be an emerging consensus, as a result of both theoretical analysis and empirical studies, that distributions of group rewards among members according to their relative contributions to the group outcome is less likely to foster group harmony and solidarity than distributing rewards equally. The papers by Mikula, Schwinger, and Leventhal *et al.* in (M), and the papers by Cohen and Greenberg, as well as their joint papers, in (G and C), provide a thorough, insightful coverage. The assumption is made in a number of papers (e.g. by Leventhal *et al.* and by the equity theorists) that rewarding members according to their contributions to the group product is more apt to enhance group productivity than rewarding them equally. So far, as I could tell, no experimental evidence supporting this assumption is presented in the volumes under consideration. My own earlier research on the effects of cooperation and competition upon group process (Deutsch, 1949) counters this assumption as does more recent research in my laboratory (Deutsch *et al.*, 1982) which compared individual and group productivity under four different distributive principles ('winner-takes-all', 'in proportion to contributions', 'equality', and 'in proportion to the need for the benefit being distributed').
- (2) Knowledge is developing of the individual differences as well as the situational factors affecting both the preferences for different distributive principles and allocation behaviour. Major and Deaux, in (G and C), present an excellent summary and critique of the literature dealing with such individual differences as sex, age, nationality, and personality: it is evident that these individual differences do systematically affect 'justice behaviour'. Sampson, in (M), presents a stimulating theoretical paper on the role of personality and social character as it relates to justice behaviour, suggesting that the conceptions of justice which are dominant in any given socio-historical period are a function of what type of social character is elicited by that period.

Schwinger, in (M), has a valuable discussion of 'the politeness ritual' and how it leads to different allocation decisions as a function of whether

one is a 'high' or 'low' contributor to the group's outcome in a paper which considers at a more general level the factors leading to the decisions among 'equity', 'equality', and 'need'. Mikula in (M) provides a systematic discussion of the elements involved in allocation decisions and a thorough review of relevant empirical work. Montada in (M), Krebs, in (G and C), and Damon and also Simmons in (L and L) present overviews of developmental changes as they relate to justice behaviour.

In brief, some of the consistent findings are that, if sex differences do appear (and they often do not), women tend to allocate less to themselves than men do (presumably because they place less value on their contributions than do men) and their allocations are more directed at fostering interpersonal harmony (i.e. they are more likely to allocate equally than are men). In Western societies, there appears to be a systematic shift with increasing age from allocations conforming to self-interest to equality to proportional equity: in part these shifts reflect cognitive development (proportional allocations require more computational skills than equal ones) and in part socialization effects. The 'politeness ritual' leads subjects who have contributed less to their group's outcome than their partners to apply the equity or contribution principle, and those who have contributed more to favour the equality principle.

- (3) A number of systematic positions have been developed about the conditions fostering the application of one or another distributive principle. These are most extensively presented in the Mikula volume. Here, Leventhal, Karuza, and Fry articulate a well-developed theory of allocation preferences, Lerner and Whitehead summarize Lerner's justice motive theory, and Sampson (also in L and L) elaborates his approach. My position (Deutsch, 1975) is widely referred to and summarized in Mikula and the other two edited books. I shall later discuss the viewpoints of the other prominent theorists.

III. There is no clear consensus on how important 'justice' is in the functioning of individuals and groups. On the one hand, the equity theorists (*cf.* Austin and Hatfield in (M)) consider that justice plays a central role in social behaviour, so much so that equity theory could be the basis for a general theory of human interaction. Similarly, Lerner's justice motive theory assumes that 'the concern with justice seems to provide a central and guiding theme in our lives, as well as in our societies'. In contrast, Leventhal, Mikula and Schwinger, Greenberg and Cohen, and many others active in the 'social psychology of justice' indicate that allocation decisions and other 'justice behaviour' could be influenced by many other considerations than a concern for justice: one might choose 'equality' to manage conflict rather than because it is just.

My own position (Deutsch, 1982) is that the moral orientation is one of the three major components of the psychological orientation with which each person orients himself to any social relationship; the other two components are the cognitive and motivational. A moral orientation towards a given social relationship or situation orients one to the mutual obligations, rights, and entitlements of the people involved in the relationship. It adds an 'ought to', 'should', or obligatory quality to a psychological orientation. The moral orientation implies that one experiences one's relationship not only from a personal perspective but also from a social perspective

that includes the perspective of the others in the relationship. A moral orientation makes the experience of injustice more than a personal experience. Not only is one personally affected; so are the other participants in the relationship, because its value underpinnings are being undermined. The various participants in a relationship have the mutual obligation to respect and protect the framework of social norms that define what is to be considered as fair or unfair in the interaction and outcomes of the participants. One can expect that the moral orientation, and hence what is considered fair, will differ in the different types of social relations.

Some social relations provide strong, clear normative frameworks and evoke strong, clear moral orientations but others do not. Even when strong, clear normative frameworks exist, some individuals will be more strongly motivated by other concerns than by their moral obligations. This might reflect either a weak moral commitment to the relationship or it might indicate other concerns that are sufficiently strong to override a moral commitment.

IV. There is an expanding rich, diversified application of the ideas related to the social psychology of justice. At the same time, this area has become enriched by contact with work in other areas of social psychology, in moral philosophy, and the other social sciences. In other words, the social psychology of justice is no longer narrow and parochial. The diverse topics of the papers in the (L and L) volume reflect the broadening of the area while the papers in the (G and C) book which approach the social psychology of justice from various substantive areas of social psychology indicate a more ecumenical approach to this area.

The (L and L) volume contains twenty papers which deal with such topics as justice in close relationships, justice in times of scarcity, legal institutions and alternative forms of dispute resolution, social change and justice motivation, retributive justice, punishment, the development of the sense of justice, and the justice motive. Among the many excellent papers, the ones that contained the most new ideas for me were the ones by Miller and Vidmar ('the social psychology of punishment'), Brickman, Folger, Goode, and Schul ('Microjustice and macrojustice'), Cook and Pearlman ('The relationship of economic growth to inequality in the distribution of income'), Vidmar ('Justice motives and other psychological factors in the development and resolution of disputes'), Kidder ('Down-to-earth justice: pitfalls on the road to legal decentralization') and Peachey and Lerner ('Law as a social trap: problems and possibilities for the future'). A paper of mine, 'Justice in "The Crunch"' is included in this volume.

The (G and C) book contains twelve chapters, including a fine introductory overview of the area and an integrative, concluding chapter by the two editors. Most of the chapters bring to bear in a systematic way orientations developed in other contexts of social psychological research on their discussions of justice; Wegner considers justice from the point-of-view of different levels and foci of awareness; Cohen uses an attributional perspective; Ajzen analyses the effects of inequity on the formation and change of attitudes; Austin and Tobiasen discuss moral evaluation in intimate relationships; Allen outlines the effects of conformity pressures; Krebs describes the interrelations among prosocial behaviour, equity, and justice; Donnerstein and Hatfield consider the relation between aggression and inequity; McClintock and Keil focus on the relations between social exchange theory and equity; Greenberg reviews justice in group and organizational contexts. The chapters are generally well-done but collectively they produce the dulling

impression of having read many *Psychological Bulletin* articles. My personal favourites in this volume are the chapters by the two editors, the paper on individual differences by Major and Deaux, the article by Krebs, and the one by McClintock and Keil on social exchange.

V. There are still major gaps and weaknesses in the literature dealing with the social psychology of justice. These are outlined below:

- (1) There is practically no research relating to the phenomenology of injustice, to the actual experiences of people who inflict injustice or to those who suffer injustice. My students and I have done a minor study (Steil, Tuchman, and Deutsch, 1978) comparing the experience of 'injustice' and of 'frustration'. Hochschild (1981), a political scientist, has done in-depth interviews with a small number of rich and poor people about their conceptions about and experiences of injustice in relation to socializing agencies (the family and education), the economy, and the polity. We should be doing more in-depth interviewing and more systematic observations of victims and victimizers in real-life contexts.
- (2) The approach to 'justice' has been too psychological and not enough social psychological; that is, it has focused on the individual rather than upon the social interaction in which 'justice' emerges. Justice emerges from conflict: the procedures and values which define 'justice' develop through negotiation among the conflicting parties. Much of current work ignores the relationship between conflict and justice and the process by which 'justice' is negotiated.
- (3) There are too few empirical studies of the socio-psychological effects of different systems of distributive justice. How do different systems work under different conditions: e.g. as a function of the amount available for distribution, the type of value to be distributed, the size of the group, the nature of their interdependence? The literature in social psychology does not seem cognizant of the important related research being done on the Kibbutzim (cf. Rosner, 1982).
- (4) 'Procedural justice' and 'retributive justice' are undoubtedly as important areas of study as 'distributive justice' but, as yet, relatively little research has been done in these areas. However, the Lerner and Lerner and the Mikula volumes do contain some interesting theoretical discussions: notably, a paper by Hogan and Emler on retributive justice in (L and L) and the papers by Leventhal *et al.* and Lerner *et al.* on procedural justice in (M).
- (5) The dethroning of equity theory as the sovereign theory of justice has led to a proliferation of many, alternate perspectives. There is a feeling of intellectual disorganization: the various theoretical strands within the area are not yet well-knit together.

THE LEADING THEORISTS

The theorists cited most frequently in the Author Indices of the three edited books are Walster-Berscheid-Walster, Leventhal, Lerner, Deutsch, Mikula-Schwinger, and Sampson. A brief commentary on the works of the other theorists follows below.

Walster-Berscheid-Walster

Equity theory, like dissonance theory, has lost its momentum, but it is by no means dead: nor should it be. Its generality is much more limited than it was perceived to be in its exuberant youth but it is still clearly applicable to a wide range of situations that can be characterized by values governing economic exchanges. Elaine Hatfield (Walster) and her former student, William Austin, are currently the most active 'equity theorists': both now appear to be using equity theory flexibly, weaving in other ideas in an *ad hoc* manner as their material requires. Although equity theory has been much criticized in recent years, it is also important to recognize its extraordinary stimulative value to research and the unusual research creativeness of its adherents: it was the clear starting point of research on the social psychology of justice.

Leventhal

Leventhal has brought an interesting and new emphasis to the social psychological study of justice by his focus on the role of the allocator, the one who decides how the rewards and resources will be distributed. The allocator, he points out, will not select allocation norms primarily in terms of abstract conceptions of justice but rather in terms of their perceived utility in achieving such objectives as enhancing long-run group productivity or fostering group solidarity. Depending upon his objectives and depending upon circumstances, one or another allocation norm may be considered by the allocator to have great instrumental value and will, as a consequence, be used as the basis for allocations.

This very productive theorist and researcher has recently left academic psychology (one hopes not permanently), but before doing so, he developed a systemic theory of allocation preferences which can also be applied to procedural preferences. His theory is basically an adaptation of the 'expected utility' model which is commonly employed in theories of economic decision-making. He points out that an individual usually has several goals in any choice situation which vary in importance to him; he also has expectations about how the chances of obtaining his respective goals will be affected by making one choice rather than another. From knowledge of the proportional strength of the individual's various goals and his expectancies about the various distributions one can calculate the strength of preference an individual will have for each of the distributions he is contemplating employing in his allocation: he will choose the one with the highest strength (i.e. the one with the highest 'expected utility').

Leventhal's theory has the many merits of an 'expected utility' theory, the most prevalent type of theory in the social sciences. It is clear, precise, and has the elegance of simplicity. However, the basic issues for a substantive theory of allocation preferences are: What determines the relative importance that an individual assigns to the various goals that could be served by any given allocation? and what determines his expectations about his chances of obtaining these various goals through a given allocation? In his writings Leventhal discusses these issues insightfully but his theory bypasses them.

In their research, Leventhal and his collaborators have mainly employed hypothetical situations in which the allocator had no strong, vested personal interest and position. The allocator was, in making his decision, mainly reflecting prevailing cultural beliefs about the effects of different norms of allocation rather

than making decisions based upon his own personal, vested interests and his concrete experiences with the particular reality about which he is deciding. Undoubtedly prevailing cultural beliefs are important determinants of real allocation decisions but so are the particularistic beliefs resulting from personal interest, position and the specific characteristics of the concrete reality in which the allocation decision has to be made. Research, supplementing that of Leventhal and his collaborators, is needed to determine how the personal positions of the allocator and the various recipients shape their ideology and reaction to different allocation norms and how groups actually function under the influence of different allocation systems. Are equitable norms actually more conducive to group productivity than equality norms as allocators in Leventhal's experiment appear to believe? Our research (Deutsch, 1949; Deutsch *et al.*, 1982a) raises questions about the validity of their belief.

Lerner

Lerner (1980) rejects the view presented by some equity theorists, that the concern for justice and deserving is a veneer which masks the more basic attribute of egoistic self-interest. He considers justice and deserving to be central organizing themes in people's lives. In Lerner's view, the sense of deserving arise as the child foregoes immediate gratification of his impulses for deferred gratification. As part of the process of doing so, the child makes a 'personal contract' with himself whereby he becomes entitled to or deserves more desirable future outcomes because of the invested efforts and the costs of frustration associated with postponing his gratification. As the child learns that his world is a place where additional investments entitles him to better outcomes, he places greater portions of his goal-seeking activities under the rules of deserving until gradually his life is organized on the basis of 'deserving' his outcomes.

There are two types of threats to any person's personal contract: (1) the threat coming from his impulses which seek immediate gratification and (2) the threat coming from the environment which may deny him his deserved outcomes despite his prior self-restraints. If the environment isn't sufficiently orderly or trustworthy, if there is evidence that deserving efforts are not appropriately compensated, as when others, as well as himself do not get what they deserve, the viability of the individual's personal contract becomes questionable. A crucial psychological link between the individual's personal contract and another's personal contract is the individual's recognition of an equivalence between himself and others: self and other exist in the same environment and are part of one another's milieu and if the environment threatens the other's personal contract, one's own is also not secure.

The point that Lerner is making is that the individual's personal contract can only be maintained if he believes in a 'just world'. Evidence that others do not get what they deserve calls into question one's own prior commitments, efforts, investments, and beliefs and allows one's immediate impulses and desires to surface in such a way as to threaten one's personal contract. Thus, the individual will be strongly motivated to believe in a just world and, when faced with evidence which appears to violate this belief, he will tend to reinterpret the evidence to make it congruent with this belief.

Lerner's 1980 book describes a large number of studies bearing upon the 'just

world hypothesis' (i.e. the hypothesis that people are motivated to maintain the belief that they live in a just world). A typical research format had students ostensibly observe a human learning experiment over closed-circuit TV in which an undergraduate woman is receiving severe electric shocks while trying to learn pairs of nonsense syllables. The results of experiments showed that: (a) most observers would vote to end the electric shock or to see to it that the person being shocked received adequate compensation; (b) if they believed that they could end the shocks or that the victim would be compensated, they did not develop a negative view of her; (c) if they could not help the victim and the victim was not compensated, the more the victim appeared to suffer, the more she was devalued by the observers. If the observers could not make the situation a just one in actuality, they derogated the victim so that it would appear to them that she deserved her fate: the more she suffered, the more she deserved to suffer. Similar research findings have been reported by many other investigators.

Although one could find flaws in some of the Lerner experiments—e.g. one wonders why samples of the subjects were not asked if the 'victim' were being treated unjustly—the results are too consistent to be questioned on this basis. Yet I find myself unconvinced by the 'just world' hypothesis. I know the world is not a just one and so, of course, does Lerner. However, I do not usually derogate the victims of injustice unless I feel personally responsible for the victim's condition or for rectifying it and am unable to do something about it. Since I do not necessarily feel defensive about myself because I am aware of injustices, I do not have to defend myself against this awareness. Perhaps this reflects a moral flaw in my character. But I still wonder why Lerner's subjects were so defensive that they could not tolerate the awareness of an injustice: if that indeed was what they were observing.

Lerner's view that the 'personal contact' is central to the sense of deserving is an interesting, original idea but I don't think it is correct. It does not seem to fit with the studies of the development of the sense of justice in young children (*cf.* Isaacs, 1946; Damon, 1977). The sense of power and self-efficacy appear to be more associated with reaping delayed rewards than does the sense of deserving; although these may be related, the relationship is by no means that of identity.

In addition to his extensive research on the 'just world hypothesis', Lerner has articulated a framework for characterizing different forms of justice as they occur in different types of interpersonal relations. He identifies three classes of interpersonal relationships: *identity* (perception of the other as being the same as self or as having an equivalent position), *unit* (perception of similarity or a cooperative bond with the other, or perception of equivalence with the other), and *nonunit* (perception of antagonistic interests and personal differences or perception of scarce resources with equally legitimate, opposed claims.) He also characterizes three classes of processes, defined in terms of the relationship among the goals of the participants; vicarious dependency (*identity*), convergent goals (*unit*), and divergent goals (*nonunit*). Each type of process can occur in each type of relationship and in any given situation either the process or relationship can be dominant. For each of his 18 subcategories (3 relationship types $\times$ 3 process types $\times$ 2 dominant types) he lists a distinctive justice norm. Thus, when the relation is dominant and it is an 'identity relation' and the participant's goals are related by 'vicarious dependency', the need principle will be used. When the

relationship is a 'unit relationship' and the goals are convergent, if the relationship is dominant then 'equality' will be employed; if the process is dominant, then 'equity' will be preferred.

The taxonomy is intriguing but it has no well-developed rationale that has been articulated. Nor has it generated much research till now. Its fruitfulness remains to be demonstrated.

Lerner takes justice seriously as a focus of both intellectual work and moral concern. He has stimulated many others, including myself, to do the same. His own work is original and evocative even if not entirely persuasive. His work seems to have considerable momentum but its direction is not clear.

Mikula and Schwinger

Mikula, from Graz, and Schwinger, from Mannheim, have together and separately been making important contributions to the social psychology of justice since the early 1970's. Since many of their publications have been in German, their theorizing and research have not been quickly absorbed into the American-dominated literature on the social psychology of justice. This has been unfortunate because of the high significance of their work. Fortunately, the Mikula book makes summaries of much of what they have done available to non-German readers.

Schwinger and Mikula have been critics of what they have termed the single-principle approach of equity theory and in favour of a multi-principle approach. As Schwinger points out the two approaches are based on different images of man: economic man as compared to social man. Mikula and Schwinger have also done much to establish recognition of the importance of the 'politeness ritual' in allocation behaviour. Mikula, in (M), analyses the processes of making an allocation decision and articulates a three-stage decisional-framework involving: (1) choosing an allocation goal; (2) choosing a justice principle according to which the allocation shall be carried out; and (3) translating this principle into a concrete mode of allocation. Although Mikula's model of allocation decision-making does not have the formal elegance of Leventhal's model, his discussion of the factors influencing choice of a justice principle has more substantive content that is specific to the domain of justice.

Sampson

Papers by Sampson appear in the (L and L) and also in the (M) volumes. In the (L and L) paper, 'Social change and the contexts of justice motivation', Sampson criticizes psychology as being too individualistic, too acontextual, and too ahistorical. Drawing upon the work of G. H. Mead, Vigotsky, C. W. Mills, and H. S. Sullivan, he offers an interpersonal formulation of psychological processes. His key notion is 'address frame' which is oriented toward the 'whom' that people address in their external or internal conversation of gestures. In address-frame terms, justice is a way people's actions become intelligible to and evaluated by themselves and others. In different socio-historical periods people learn to formulate their thought and understanding in different address frames. And further, he suggests that since people do not address the same others in their

thinking, they may not share the same view of social reality; hence, all social interaction (including issues of justice) have a potentially negotiated quality.

Sampson, in (L and L) offers a view of history which indicates that values relating to justice have shifted from 'particularistic' values, prior to the sixteenth century, to an increasing emphasis on 'universalistic' values since the sixteenth century. He suggests that the recent efforts to extend universalistic values to include blacks, women, homosexuals, etc. will have the unwitting consequence of leading to a new form of particularism in which a 'narcissitic' justice is defined primarily in the terms of personal self-interest.

In 'Justice and social character', Sampson stresses that the implicit character or model of human functioning that is required by the existing social psychological formulations of justice (e.g. the self-interested, the other-directed, the socially comparative, the rational-calculating type) may be dominant only for a particular socio-historical period or only for upper middle class college students. He further suggests that the primary use of experimental methods, as compared to systematic naturalistic observation and depth interviews leads to an overemphasis on the more rational and calculating qualities of people.

Sampson then discusses the differences in value-orientation and justice perspectives of the 'other-directed', 'tradition-directed', and 'inner-directed' type character described by Riesman (1950). He considers the 'other-directed' type characteristic of our time but suggests that a new, narcissistic, 'entitlement' oriented character is beginning to emerge. In a further discussion, he indicates that the 'fear of success' personality may lead some people to favour cooperation and equal sharing. Finally, he describes the justice orientations of the character types identified by Fromm (1947): the 'receptive', 'exploitative', 'hoarding', and 'marketing' characters.

Sampson's perspectives are a good antidote to the narrow, parochial, ahistorical tendencies in social psychology in general and, more particularly, in the social psychology of justice. There is every reason to believe that different socio-historical periods, different cultures, and different personality-types may have different conceptions and orientations to justice. We can be helped to overcome our unwitting biases by being aware of the governing biases that exist in our historical period, in our culture, and in our types of personalities. This is not to suggest, as Sampson seems to imply, that a theory could not be developed which is able to take these factors into account.

Sampson's presentation of his views tends to be programmatic and somewhat polemical. His writings are interesting and stimulating but his critiques of the work of others are not sufficiently detailed to be persuasive. His own theoretical position, as expressed in the concept of address frame, is vague and undeveloped.

REFERENCES

- Adams, J. S. (1963). 'Toward an understanding of inequity', *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 67: 422-436.
- Adams, J. S. (1965). 'Inequity in social exchange'. In: Berkowitz, L. (Ed.) *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, Vol. 2, Academic Press, New York.
- Adams, J. S. and Freedman, S. (1976). 'Equity theory revisited: Comments and annotated bibliography'. In: Berkowitz, L. and Walster, E. (Eds) *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, Vol. 9, Academic Press, New York.

- Berkowitz, L. and Walster, E. (1976). 'Equity theory: Toward a general theory of social action'. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, Vol. 9, Academic Press, New York.
- Damon, W. (1977). *The Social World of the Child*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.
- Deutsch, M. (1949). 'An experimental study of the effects of cooperation and competition upon group process', *Human Relations*, 2: 199-231.
- Deutsch, M. and Collins, M. E. (1951). *Interracial Housing: A Psychological Evaluation of a Social Experiment*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.
- Deutsch, M. (1973). *The Resolution of Conflict: Constructive and Destructive Processes*, Yale University Press, New Haven, CT.
- Deutsch, M. (1974). 'Awakening the sense of injustice'. In: Lerner, M. and Ross, M. (Eds) *The Quest for Justice: Myth, Reality, Ideal*, Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Canada.
- Deutsch, M. (1975). 'Equity, equality, and need: What determines which value will be used as the basis for distributive justice', *Journal of Social Issues*, 31: 137-150.
- Deutsch, M. (1977). *The Social Psychology of Distributive Justice*, an unpublished manuscript.
- Deutsch, M. (1978). 'The social psychology of justice'. In: *Proceedings of the International Symposium on Social Psychology*, October 6-8, Kyoto, Japan. The Japanese Group Dynamics Association, pp. 23-46.
- Deutsch, M. (1979). 'Education and distributive justice: Some reflections on grading systems', *American Psychologists*, 34: 341-401.
- Deutsch, M. (1981a). 'A critical review of equity theory: An alternative perspective on the social psychology of justice', *International Journal of Group Tensions*, Vol. 9.
- Deutsch, M. (1981b). 'Justice in the crunch'. In: Lerner, M. J. and Lerner, S. C. (Eds) *The Justice Motive in Social Behaviour*, Plenum Press, New York.
- Deutsch, M., Ziviani, C., Mei, L., Wenck, W., Lansberg, I., and Medvene, L. (1982). 'A social psychological analysis of distributive systems and their consequences'. Various papers presented at a symposium of the American Psychological Association, Washington, D.C. August, 1982.
- Deutsch, M. (1982). 'Interdependence and psychological orientation'. In: Derlega, V. and Gzelak, J. L. (eds) *Cooperation and Helping Behavior: Theories and Research*, Academic Press, New York.
- Folger, R. (Eds.) (in press). *The Sense of Injustice: Social Psychological Perspectives*, Plenum, New York.
- Fromm, E. (1947). *Man for Himself*, Rinehart, New York.
- *Greenberg, J. and Cohen, R. L. (Eds) (1982). *Equity and Justice in Social Behaviour*, Academic Press, New York.
- Hochschild, J. L. (1981). *What's Fair? American Beliefs About Distributive Justice*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge.
- Homans, G. C. (1961). *Social Behaviour: Its Elementary Forms*, Harcourt, Brace and World, New York.
- Homans, G. C. (1982). 'Foreward'. In: Greenberg, J. and Cohen, R. L. (Eds) *Equity and Justice in Social Behaviour*, Academic Press, New York.
- Isaacs, S. (1946). *Social Development in Young Children*, George Rutledge and Sons, London.
- Lerner, M. J. (1966). 'The unjust consequences of the need to believe in a just world'. Paper read at the American Psychological Association, New York, September.
- Lerner, M. J. (1970). 'The desire for justice and reactions to victims'. In: Macaulay, J. and Berkowitz, L. (Eds) *Atruism and Helping Behaviour*, Academic Press, New York.
- Lerner, M. J. (1971). 'Observers evaluation of victim: justice, guilt, and veridical perception', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 20: 127-135.
- Lerner, M. J. and Ross, M. (1974). *The Quest for Justice: Myth, Reality, Ideal*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Canada.
- Lerner, M. J. (1975). 'The justice motive in social behaviour: Introduction', *Journal of Social Issues*, 31: 1-19.
- *Lerner, M. J. (1980). *The Belief in a Just World: A Fundamental Delusion*, Plenum Press, New York.
- *Lerner, M. J. and Lerner, S. C. (Eds) (1981). *The Justice Motive in Social Behavior*, Plenum Press, New York.

- Leventhal, G. S. (1976a). 'The distribution of rewards and resources in groups and organization'. In: Berkowitz, L. and Walster, E. (Eds) *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, Vol. 9, Academic Press, New York.
- Leventhal, G. S. (1976b). 'Fairness in social relationships'. In: Thibaut, J., Spence, J. T. and Carson, R. (Eds) *Contemporary Topics in Social Psychology*, General Learning Press, Morristown, NJ.
- Messick, D. M. and Cook, K. S. (Eds) (in press) *Theories of Equity: Psychological and Sociological Perspectives*, Praeger, New York.
- Mikula, G. and Schwinger, T. (1978). 'Intermember relations and reward allocations: Theoretical considerations of affects'. In: Brandstutter, H., Davis, J. H., and Schuler, H. (Eds) *Dynamics of Group Decisions*, Sage, Beverly Hills, CA.
- *Mikula, G. (Ed.) (1980). *Justice and Social Interaction*, Springer-Verlag, New York.
- Riesman, D. (1950). *The Lonely Crowd*, Yale University Press, New Haven.
- Rosner, M. (1982). *Democracy, Equality, and Change: The Kibbutz and Social Theory*, Norwood Editions, Darby, PA.
- Sampson, E. E. (1975). 'On justice as equality', *Journal of Social Issues*, 31: 45-64.
- Walster, E., Berscheid, E. and Walster, G. W. (1978). *Equity: Theory and Research*, Allyn and Bacon, Inc., Boston.

RÉSUMÉ

Dans le cadre d'une revue comparative de quatre livres publiés récemment, l'auteur évalue l'état actuel des connaissances dans le domaine de la justice. De façon spécifique, il discute le rôle de la théorie de l'équité, la diversité des principes de distribution, le rôle de la justice dans le comportement social, l'élargissement des perspectives dans le domaine, ainsi que quelques lacunes et déficiences dans la littérature. Une évaluation des principaux théoriciens dans le domaine conclut la revue comparative.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Im Rahmen einer vergleichenden Rezension von vier Neuerscheinungen im Bereich 'Sozialpsychologie der Gerechtigkeit' stellt der Autor den gegenwärtigen Stand von Theorie und Forschung auf diesem Gebiet dar. Ausführlich diskutiert werden die Rolle der Austauschtheorie, die verschiedenen Verteilungskriterien, die Bedeutung der Gerechtigkeit für das soziale Verhalten, neue Perspektiven in der Gerechtigkeitsforschung sowie Lücken in der Literatur. Abschließend werden die Beiträge führender Gerechtigkeits-Theoretiker gewürdigt.

*This review is based on these four books.